

MACAULAY'S USE OF LITERATURE

99

its importance. There are certainly some instances in which he makes too much of an item of information derived from these sources, but taking the book as a whole the charge is not true. He employs such evidence exactly as it ought to be employed, and that is why his method of using it deserves detailed examination. Popular literature of this kind is poor evidence as to facts, but excellent evidence as to feelings, and it is for the latter purpose that Macaulay uses it.

The popularity of a particular song at a particular moment proves conclusively that the sentiments and opinions it expressed were shared by the multitude. At the beginning of the reign of James the English people were full of loyalty to the Crown and hostility to the Whigs and Exclusionists. In all the convivial gatherings of the time and at the elections to the Parliament of 1685, one song was on every Tory's lips. ' The procession, as it marched/ says Macaulay in his account of the Cheshire election, ' sang " Joy to Great Caesar " , a loyal ode, which had lately been written by Durfey, and which, though, like all Durfey's writings, utterly contemptible, was, at that time, almost as popular as Lillibullero became a few years later/ ¹ Three years later, in the autumn of 1688, when James was endeavouring to fill

the English
army with Irish Catholics and to destroy the
predominance
of the Protestants in Ireland, Lillibullero
became the
popular song. Macaulay's method of
introducing, para-
phrasing, and explaining the political
significance of this
song is worth noting.

Public feeling did not then manifest itself by
those signs
with which we are familiar, by large meetings,
and by
vehement harangues. Nevertheless it
found a vent.

il,474(iv).